

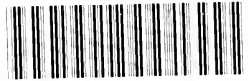
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REV. JOHN R. WARNER'S
ORATION,

JULY 4, 1861.

OUR TIMES AND OUR DUTY ;

AN ORATION

DELIVERED BY REQUEST OF THE

GETTYSBURG ZOUAVES,

BEFORE THE

CITIZENS CIVIL AND MILITARY

OF

GETTYSBURG AND VICINITY,

IN

Spangler's Grove, July 4th, 1861.

BY REV. J. R. WARNER.

GETTYSBURG :

PRINTED BY H. C. NEINSTEDT, CHAMBERSBURG ST.
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Gettysburg, July 20, 1861.

REV. J. R. WARNER :

DEAR SIR,—We have heard with profound regret that a few persons in our midst, whose sympathies are undoubtedly with the Southern traitors and rebels, denounce your Oration delivered at the request of "The Gettysburg Zonaves" on the 4th inst., as partisan in its tone and sentiment, and "inappropriate." In order to afford the loyal citizens of our town and country an opportunity of reading your Address, and of judging for themselves, that the charges brought against it are unwarranted, and only such as traitors to the Constitution and laws of our Country would make, we respectfully request a copy for publication. Hoping you will accede to our request, we remain,

Yours, truly,

R. G. Harper,	J. R. Keiser,
A. M. Hunter,	R. Horner,
A. D. Buchler,	Jas. J. Wills,
D. McConaughy,	John Hoke,
Jno. F. McCreary, ⁴	Leigh R. Baugher,
H. J. Fahnestock,	David Wills,
J. D. Paxton,	Chas. Horner,
J. C. Guinn,	D. A. Buchler,
R. A. Lyttle,	Geo. Arnold,
H. G. Finney,	Chas. C. Hummel,
A. H. Groh,	J. L. Smith,
T. Duncan Renfrew,	M. C. Horine,
H. W. Roth,	Theod. L. Seip,
D. M. Kemmerer,	H. J. Watkins,
W. V. Gotwald,	Wilson Leiser,
Frank Richards,	T. C. Pritchard,
M. Weidman,	Michael Colver,
E. L. Rowe,	John J. Cressman,
R. B. Hitz,	M. G. Boyer,
Leopold Benze,	B. Harrie James,
Philip Doerr,	C. M. George,
Samuel Stouffer,	J. B. Riemensnyder,
D. Sourry Jones,	E. W. Meisenhelder,
Henry C. Grossman,	Leonard Groh,
Jacob F. Wicklein,	Alfred Yeiser,
C. Galen Treichler,	Jac. H. Wicting,
S. F. Stadelman,	Jno. C. Lane.

Gettysburg, July 20, 1861.

GENTLEMEN :

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of this morning, desiring a copy of the Oration delivered in the Grove on the 4th inst. The circumstances you narrate, as surprising, as to every loyal heart they must be painful, render my compliance with your request a duty imperatively demanded. The oration which I cannot but regard as altogether unworthy to meet the public eye, shall be furnished you at the earliest possible moment my professional duties will admit. Having been delivered almost entirely extempore in both thought and language, I will be compelled to write it out ; and in its preparation for the press, will take a liberty which I hope you will approve. I will, with your consent, make some additions, strictly adhering to the sentiments to which you listened, but endeavoring to unfold those sentiments with the fullness which I had originally intended, but which my great fears of trespassing upon the time allotted to the succeeding exercises of the day entirely precluded.

Deeply sensible of the obligation under which you have placed me by your effort to shield me from most unworthy imputation ; and with yourselves regretting that expression of sentiments of unswerving loyalty to our country should afford the occasion of developing an element in our midst, which we had fondly hoped, belonged only to the domain of disloyalty,

I remain,

Gentlemen,

Most gratefully and respectfully,

Yours,

JOHN R. WARNER.

Messrs. HARPER, & OTHERS.

ORATION.

THOUGH you and I, Fellow-Citizens, have often heard, and as often read, the title-deed of our liberties, as well as of our national existence, yet do I feel that I only express the sentiment common to every bosom here, when I say, that the Declaration throughout its reading to-day, seemed new—all new—clothed with the freshness of morning beauty.

Once more have we heard proclaimed aloud the great truths and lofty principles embodied in that document—truths and principles, which eighty-five years ago, as they were promulgated to anxious ears and throbbing hearts, the winds caught up, wafted around the world, and ever since have been permeating not only this land, but all lands—finding their way into, and scattering a bright effulgence even through, the morally darkest dens of despotism. Those truths and principles we have heard this day for perhaps the hundredth time—yet as, to-day, we strive to grasp them, they assume a moral magnitude, which more than ever transcends the grasp; while the concluding resolve, the final sacred, solemn pledge strikes with a fresh awe, and fires our souls with a new courage, strong and holy. But how is it, that the Declaration to-day seems clothed with a power so strongly inspiring? As Jefferson laid down his pen beside it, we behold it—as it first was heard amid the shades of Independence Square, it has echoed through this grove—as it was, it is, and as it is, it will be, still unchanged, save in the ever-increasing halo of moral splendor which surrounds it. But all else how changed! Strength has taken

the place of weakness ; wealth and splendor, the place of want and poverty ; the wilderness has become a fruitful field, and the handful of corn cast upon the mountains by patriot hands, has grown and spread until the fruit thereof shakes like Lebanon. But very far does this fall short of constituting the reason of that change of feeling, which this day pervades us : we find the reason upon looking at the darkest shade of the darkest picture, which until now American history has ever presented. Treason has usurped the place of loyalty, and while she calls her hosts to her standard, with unhallowed tread they press the very graves of Marion, of Moultrie, and of Sumpter. The heritage bought by blood, and hallowed by prayers, though now the grandest and mightiest on the face of the earth, trembles from "turret to foundation-stone," as by the unworthy scions of a noble stock, the principles on which it was founded are being tried to their utmost.

No wonder then, that now we read the title-deed of our liberties with new life and in a new light. We hear it this day in the spirit of the times which called it into existence. The long slumbering spirit of '76 has been quickened again to life, and now not three millions only, but nearly ten times three millions breathe it. Well and nobly did Jefferson earn a deathless name, when in that document, with but a few pen-strokes, he wrote those principles, on which the best government which ever shed the invaluable blessings of freedom upon a portion of the race, has been founded. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the inalienable rights of man." And in that morally sublime pledge given by that host of worthies to each other, to the world and to posterity, when for the establishment of those principles they pledged all they had to pledge — their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor—we to-day feel—there was no uncertain sound. We know now the meaning of both principles and pledge, as we had thought we should never know them — we know them experimentally — as we see rebellion whet her dagger, and lift her parricidal arm against the government, in

which all our earthly hopes for ourselves and for posterity are centered. We have seen the world startled by the question new and strange,—“Can the American Republic be a failure in governmental experiment?”

It is an august question, and the weighty responsibilities of a corresponding answer rest with us. The shades of the signers of that Declaration all seem to rise up and demand it. A listening anxious world waits in suspense to hear it, while in every true American bosom there dwells the consciousness, that God and posterity will demand an account of the manner in which the answer shall be given. It is given. Hear it rolling up from Charleston Harbor, echoing from Bunker, breaking the long silence of the Alleghanies, reverberating from the clefts in which the far western hunter finds a home, and how, caught up in peals majestic by the Mississippi and the Hudson, is answered by the Ohio and the St. Lawrence!—A voice, which in majesty outswells the roar of the greatest of earth's cataracts—the united voice of more than twenty millions pledging each to the other, to the world and to unborn generations, for the perpetuity of the blessings which they have inherited,—their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.

We are told, Sirs, that the muse of history is passionless;—like a vestal must she be, if without a flashing eye, a burning brow, and a throbbing heart, she pens the record of eighteen hundred and sixty-one in America. Never before has she been called to depict a scene such as this, on which her pencil must now be employed, the stirring record even of our emancipation from British thralldom, failing to afford a parallel. While she speaks of the strongest nation on earth divided against itself, she must also depict the mighty arm of strength which this same nation has raised in its own defence. An army, called without the warning of a day; yet in a day answering the call. Answering from field and forum, from bar and workshop, from the classic grove and from the busy mart of commerce, from the palace of princely ease, and

from the home of humble toil, bench, — yea and pulpit responding, all distinctions forgotten, all party lines wiped out, all creeds commanding to one service, all inspired by one impulse, and that among the loftiest impulses which give dignity to human action, or color to human feeling,—the warm and mighty impulse of genuine patriotism.

Patriotism is a word in use so common that our ideas of it had become very vague. They are so no longer. By a view of the grand army of America we are by the splendid spectacle taught the meaning of the word *Patriotism*. We see it in the full splendors of its moral magnificence, as the eye surveys yon mighty column, — its left resting upon the Atlantic's shore, its right extending to the very frontiers of western civilization. In the circumstances of its formation, in the moral strength of its character, in the greatness of its numbers, and in the glorious object of its mission.—When before has war put on such a front! when since the Titans stormed Olympus has the muse of history waved her magic wand over such an army, and in such a cause? Borne aloft on the wing of imagination, amid the host with pride, we descry our own Buehler and M'Pherson, with their gallant patriotic bands. Turning away from the army itself, we cannot but exclaim: All hail, and farewell, ye brave! As the God of battles went with the Fathers, may he now go with the Sons! Waiving an adieu to the martial host, we turn to consider next,

The Cause which has marshaled it.

The cause is stated in one word—*necessity*. Choice under the circumstances, there was none. A rebellion, the most causeless which ever lifted a horrid front against a good government and a generous brotherhood, has risen up and loudly threatens to lay the noble fabric of self-government in America low in the dust. We must either submit to the execution of the threat, or by force of arms resist its execution. No other alternative now is left us than to meet all the evils and horrors of civil war, which we know full well is no chimera, or submit to the infinitely worse evil of sink-

ing under a rule to which Austrian despotism or Bourbon sway were greatly preferable.

The question, to decide which the arbitrament of battle has been sought, is — shall we have a Government, or no government — law and order, or anarchy and confusion?

I need not attempt to prove that the very life of society in any, or all its forms, civil, ecclesiastical or social, depends upon the unyielding obedience of its members, to all its just and righteous laws. Wherever on the wings of thought you are carried throughout the Lord's great domain, you find, that "Order is Heaven's first law." Without it the material Universe becomes a ruin. The moment its harmony is broken, that moment all its luminaries are extinguished — its elements that moment run to chaos. Equally steadfast are the moral laws of the Divine Government. No Lucifer lifts the arm of rebellion against a Holy God with impunity. Neither does man infringe the Divine plan without the endurance of penalty proportioned to his crime. What is the whole Gospel-plan of Salvation but the gracious vindication of the Lord's violated law? Must the Divine Government be thus maintained, by the most unflinching adherence to law, and can human government exist without it? Let one State or family or individual in the Union trample with impunity on its laws; and where is the security of any other State, family, or individual throughout its length and breadth? To subvert the order under which we have attained our present powerful, splendid and happy condition as a nation, is at once the design and the sin of the Southern rebellion. They would overthrow the Government under which, both they and we enjoy the most unestimable privileges, and in its place establish — we know not what. The duty, therefore, of every American citizen, we regard as at once plain and sacred—to maintain the integrity of the Union, and uphold its Constitution to the utmost limit of his power, let them be assailed in whatever form or under whatever color Rebellion may present herself.

The principle of secession deals its heavy blows against

the very strongest pillars which support the nation. Admit it, and all law and order are at once at an end. Acknowledge the right of South Carolina to secede to-day, and you yield the right of Virginia, Pennsylvania or New York to secede to-morrow, and on the principle on which Pennsylvania can withdraw from the Union, Adams County can withdraw from her.

Establish then this assumed right, and what is left us? A government not worth the purchase of an hour, liable to be overthrown at any moment which the interest or caprice of any of its members may dictate. The sovereignty of one State separate—superior to that of all the States united, we cannot but regard as one of the most absurd doctrines which intelligent men have ever been called upon to discuss, and as treasonable as it is absurd. To attempt to prove that the Constitution of this Union embodies such a principle is to cast a reflection upon the common sense of its framers, if not to charge them with affecting to weave a bond of union among the States in appearance stronger than death, but in reality weaker than tow. When that ardent patriot and mighty statesman Webster lifted his majestic voice against the doctrine thirty years ago, he said, “The whole matter it is hoped will blow over, and men will return to a sound mode of thinking; but of one thing be ye assured: the first step in the programme of secession, which shall be an infringement of constitutional law, shall be promptly met; I would not remain an hour in any administration that would not meet such attempts effectually and at once.” Thus spoke Webster, who though dead still speaketh. He saw clearly that which we now see, that when we can no longer look to the Constitution of these States as a bond of union among the States, each adhering to it with the firmest allegiance, at once a channel of blessing and a shield of protection, then must *Ichabod* be written upon the keystone of the Federal arch; then must that form of government founded by a noble host, the dust of many of whom now sleeps beneath the unhallowed tread of treason, be pronounced an unsuccessful ex-

periment—living only in the history of other days—the dust of its once noble fabric, having become the sport of every wanton breeze. Then in its stead must come the reign of liberty without law, that rule which leaves the weak at the mercy of the strong, making might the sole arbiter of right. When we pronounce this a form of tyranny which of all forms is the most to be dreaded, we only appeal for our proof to the terror-stricken, scattered families, the desolated homes, and the crushed, bleeding hearts of tens of thousands of Union-loving men not two hundred miles away.

To rescue the nation from overthrow, and to turn away the fearful tide of evil which must inevitably follow; evil which no pencil can depict, ineffable by human language and illimitable in extent, the government has resorted to a duty as painful as it is imperative—the duty of taking up the weapons of self-preservation and self-defence.

It is almost enough to provoke a smile of ridicule to hear men say, “the Government has waged a cruel war upon our Southern brethren.” That the war is indeed cruel and unnatural we all know, yea with sadness we know it; but the charge which throws its responsibility upon the government is too absurdly false to justify the waste of a moment in its refutation. Who knows not the history of the last winter-months? Who has forgotten how insult quickly followed upon the heels of insult? Who needs now be told that with a forbearance wanting its parallel in history—a forbearance which the world had begun to pronounce the evidence of weakness, the nation looked calmly on, while even the weapons threatening her very existence, were being forged; and before ever she uttered a word or lifted an arm in her own defence, was smitten in the very face? Whose fort is yon with as blackened walls, and its battered, broken turrets—all within now silent as the grave? What flag is yon, which for many days drooped mournfully over a handful of starving braves, now all torn, and in the very dust dishonored?

Is it the flag which through seven long weary years our own Washington followed through darkness and dismay.

through cold and heat, through fire and through water ; who to defend which counted no dangers appalling ? Answer ye ! And when ye answer, tell us, is this a war on behalf of that cause which to the great heart of that same Washington was dearer than his life — yea, for which he would have sacrificed his very existence, even though a thousand lives perished in his own — tell us — is it a war of aggression, or a war of defence ?

Aggression, Sirs, has no place even in the thought of any man who to-day rallies beneath yon flag. Life, Country, Privilege, Hope and Duty are words which either separately or combined explain our action. Our Southern brethren we have never learned to hate, though with a perfect hatred they now seem to hate both us and our institutions. In that deadly hatred exhibited by recent action, they have sealed—completely sealed—literally with the cold stamp of death, and figuratively by the hand of rebellion, the lips of many a man who in the face of obloquy, and under charge of conservatism too extreme, often plead in their behalf. The deed is done ! they have waged a war upon us ! we would be to them as brothers — we cannot be under them as slaves : so with sword in hand we meet them.

We trust our cause to God, and our characters to the future, well assured, that whatever differences of opinion there may be now, when the storm of passion subsides and reason again resumes her mild, yet potent sway, there will be but one opinion. If it be not pronounced in our day, posterity will pronounce it. With a glow of honest pride, generations to come will read the record of their fathers — a record which will tell that we counted no treasure too valuable to give ; no duty too hard to perform ; no sacrifice too severe to be endured ; and no blood too precious to be shed, for the maintenance and defence of the best government which since the days of the Jewish Theocracy has afforded blessing to man, and been the means of glorifying God.

Since then the object of the government is neither the destruction nor the subjugation of any portion, but the sal-

vation of the whole, we are led in all candor to ask, on what can men found the plea so often heard, the plea for "Compromise?" If by compromise they mean the offering of terms to Rebellion, we would not enter the lists with them even for a moment. Then do we understand their word as only another word for Secession, which is itself but another word for Treason. What patriot can ask the Government to yield to terms with those unworthy sons, to whom she has imparted all the strength they have, without whose fostering care they had never been able to lift an arm or strike a blow, yet now hold the dagger at the very bosom whence their power has been derived? When thus we hear the word "Compromise" used, we think only of the weakness without the boldness of rebellion.

We have often heard men, however, whose loyalty none would dispute, deprecating the awful evils of civil war, ask that same question so often found upon the lips of treason: "Can there be no compromise?" With them, if there yet remain any such, this is a grave question — and graver still the responsibilities of the answer. Time was, when perhaps an honorable compromise of differences was possible. Sadly, yet plainly must all now see, that that time has passed. Remonstrance has done her utmost; Argument is now powerless; Entreaty, with all her touching art has been spurned, and now what compromise is that which would satisfy the malcontents? Did they ground their quarrel upon oppression, the burden could be removed. Were there any even alleged infringements of constitutional right, then could the government and a loyal brotherhood hear their complaints and right their wrongs. As no wrongs are alleged, no concessions can be made. As they tell no tale of grievance, they can receive no sweets of consolation. Their cry is not of the lash, but for the sceptre; not because they are trodden down, but because they must have the reins. Your offers then of compromise, could they even be heard, *would be spurned*. The rebellion asks no compromise, it demands recognition among the powers of the earth. You

may cry Peace, peace ! It wants no peace other than the peace won by conquest.

Perhaps the plea for compromise means just to "let them alone." Christian feeling may indeed suggest this, without looking at the consequences which to Christianity it involves. Just let them do as they please ! Let them indeed for the establishment of their government, which involves the overthrow of ours, appeal to the very worst passions of the human heart ! Why, Brethren, hear the proclamations of their leaders. See them inaugurate piracy and perjury ; hear them attempt to sanctify robbery and repudiation, and can you as Christians, can you as patriots, can you as Americans, offer them either a parley, a truce, or as ye choose to call it—*a compromise* ? No, Brethren, No ! With bloody hands they have stifled even the voice of Palliation. If our cause be just, it *must* be maintained ; if it be just and righteous, the same God who was with us in former troubles will be with us now, and He will maintain it. With us be the performance of duty, with Him be the issue. When taught by sad experience, the evils of revolt — causeless and iniquitous — our erring brethren lay down their weapons, and at the feet of the Government which they have so grossly wronged, lift up their hands and ask for mercy, then in the exercise of that feeling given by the religion of our blessed Jesus, we will join you in the plea for compromise ; even though their hands be all red with the innocent blood of our kinsmen, blood as noble and as generous as ever flowed, we will plead that the government will show itself as merciful as it now shows itself brave and powerful. Then and not till then will we plead for compromise, but none other compromise than the compromise of *Treason's awful penalty*.

We live, my friends, in times of fearful trial as well as times of immense responsibility. No trifling duties are imposed upon the men of this generation. Let us see to it, that we perform them like men, like Americans, and like Christians. Yes, I say, like Christians. Let us never forget that in

the bestowment of our heritage the interference of our God, bordered on the province of a miracle. He still lives. He lives to defend us if we seek him, to forsake us if we reject him. Let us then imitate the example and emulate the spirit of those fathers, to whose tears, prayers, privations and blood, we owe, under God, all that we are and all that we hope to be. Our country now is in as yet the darkest days of its trial. Let us work for it, in whatever form of work duty sends forth her commands. As the servants of Him, whose name is above every name, let us support it with all the influence conferred upon us, and let us never cease to pray for it, until we shall cease to pray. Every thing this day reminds us of our duty, not only the present and the future, but also the memories of the past. The shades of Lee, and Rutledge, and Hancock, and Adams, and Jefferson, and all that host whose names form the brightest constellation in our national firmament, all seem to pass before us in solemn review to-day, while each asks as he passes, "Will ye be true to your trust?" I think I speak the words of truth and soberness, when I say, our answer is the answer of more than twenty millions of freemen, who with a loud, grand, deep and mighty voice, heard even amid the higher circles of yon far, far-off spheres, this day cry: "Return to your rest, ye shades of the mighty! and thou, Great Chieftain, whose requiem yon beautiful Potomac ceaselessly sings—sleep thou on! the smoke of battle covers our heritage, the tocsin of treason peals throughout it; yet as the God of Battles—the ally of the Fathers is the ally of the Sons, as you left it—so we have it—and as we have it, so we will transmit it—unbroken, undivided, unimpaired!" Putting our trust in the King of kings we feel ourselves empowered to proclaim to the nations of the earth, on this, the natal anniversary of our Independence, that as now they see Liberty seated on the dome of yonder Capitol—Jehovah of Hosts assisting us—they shall ever see her—thirty-four stars shining in her coronet—thirty-four UNITED STATES still circling round her feet. The watch word which lingered on the dying lips of the

Fathers of the Republic, the Sons caught up, and with the heart's best and holiest emotions this day sound forth. And long, long after we shall have passed before the throne of the Ancient of days, from Ocean to Ocean, from Northern heights to Southern plains, and back from even the shade of the Palmetto to the pine-clad hills of Maine, ever new, ever fresh, ever grandly inspiriting, will arise the glorious cry of America, "LIBERTY AND UNION, NOW AND FOREVER — ONE AND INSEPARABLE !"

N. B. I cannot but entertain the hope, that the spirit which has rendered the publication of the oration a necessity, has been misunderstood; and if not, that time will bring its possessors under the sway of wiser and better counsels.

J. R. W.

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